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## **Facility Begins Treating Radioactive Waste**

*Idaho Falls, Idaho...* Less than four years after groundbreaking, BNFL Inc.'s Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Facility has begun processing radioactive waste.

On August 21, 2000, leaders from the U.S. Department of Energy, BNFL Inc., and the community gathered to commemorate the groundbreaking of the new waste treatment facility. What followed was a flurry of activity to meet a significantly compressed construction schedule. A planned four-year construction project was completed in just 28 months. Construction was completed in December 2002.

The facility then entered an 18-month commissioning phase during which all of the various systems and components were put through a series of comprehensive tests. Over the past two months, a series of BNFL and DOE reviews were conducted to verify readiness to proceed with operations. Based on the results of these reviews, DOE authorized BNFL to commence operations. The first radioactive waste was introduced into the facility on Tuesday afternoon.

The treatment facility will allow waste containers to be opened, sorted, and repackaged to meet the waste disposal requirements. Furthermore, the waste processed in the Treatment Facility will be supercompacted – compressed by a press with 2,000 tons of force – to significantly reduce the volume of the waste shipped to and disposed of at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico.

While the treatment facility was being commissioned, BNFL Inc. was also retrieving, characterizing, and shipping waste to WIPP. Waste retrieval operations began in March 2003 and waste shipments began a week later.

The waste that has been shipped since March 2003 did not require any repackaging to meet WIPP requirements. Therefore, it did not need to be processed in the new treatment facility.

The Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project represents a \$500 million BNFL investment under a privatized contract with DOE. The project will process approximately 65,000 cubic meters of transuranic waste stored at INEEL and prepare it for shipment out of Idaho.

BNFL Inc. is an Arlington, Virginia-based environmental cleanup company providing waste management, decontamination and decommissioning, and facility operations for the nation's environmental and nuclear challenges.

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